

ENGLISH LANGUAGE LITERACY FOR THE NATIVE SPEAKER

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ABSTRACT

The desire to learn a new skill or polish an old one for better employment prospects inspires many adults to enroll in community colleges. However, being away from school for a long time or having struggled in K-12 schooling, can make that transition back to the classroom difficult for adult students. As part of enrollment, they take an entrance exam, and if they do not perform well on the English Reading and Writing portions, they may be identified as “illiterate” in Academic English, and are required to complete developmental education classes in order to begin their college courses. While English is their native language, the formal dialect used in educational and professional settings may differ enough from their home dialect of English that they struggle to communicate within these settings.

In the developmental education classroom, students need the sociolinguistic education that will advance them into college level courses and give them the skills in communicative proficiency to present themselves as literate adults in academic and professional settings. A pedagogy drawn from Teaching English as a Second

Language principles and practices is instrumental in facilitating the acquisition of Academic English, which is used to identify literacy, for those who speak a less formal dialect of American English. It is through the acquisition of the Academic English dialect that these students will find success in communicating within academic and professional communities.

This abstract accurately represents the content of the candidate's thesis. I recommend its publication.

Approved: Joanne Addison

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The Year Begins

The school year begins in my developmental education class at a community college as I hand out my syllabus to a classroom of hardworking and inspiring adults who will teach me far more about life than I will teach them about literacy. These students are not the young teenaged college freshmen taking a small step from home and looking for an economical way to complete their core courses. Rather, the population in developmental education classes is an amalgamation of both young and old who have thus far found school an unwelcome challenge. Yet, here they are to begin again, to get a fresh start, and to prepare themselves for the rigors of higher education.

Before me, leaning his chair against the back wall, is the imposing 34 year old 6'4" ex-convict tattoo artist who later this semester will mold a flower out of Play-doh and explain to the class how it is a metaphor for a paragraph. Next to him, the soldier whose memory of his first battle in Iraq will shape his writings from a description of the roadside bombing that killed his best friend to an argumentative essay against two-year long deployments. In the next row forward is the 22 year old woman who will write of her decision four years earlier, during the last night she could pay for a motel for herself and her two children, to hand them over for adoption the next morning. Up front, the anxious 40 year old woman who has not seen the

inside of a school since she was in the eighth grade, but who is determined to succeed as an example to her teenage sons. She talks quietly before class begins with the 28 year old mother of two who will, later this semester, turn in a visual essay that shows her awakening from drug addiction through her night and day imagery. Finally, rushing in a bit late, the 21 year old homeless man, not yet used to schedules as he has been without a home, job, or education for seven years now. The PTSD that he suffers after watching his mother gunned down in the last apartment he called home, catches up to him occasionally as his knowledge is locked behind the memories of the tragedy and fogged by the medication the state gives him.

Together, we begin a year of discovery about our selves and our abilities within the educational structure through the community college system. The developmental education classes are typically offered at a community college which, by nature, offers a unique environment for secondary education. According to the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC), the shared mission of these schools in the United States is to offer “access to education for many nontraditional students” who seek well-defined opportunities and programs to meet specific needs. Community college students, who made up 44% of all undergraduate students in 2008, each have a specific reason for enrolling which could range from completing a 2-year certificate for employment, transferring to a 4-year institution, attaining skills for a particular job, or pursuing a hobby (AACC). The diversity of the reasons for

coming to a community college reflects the diversity of the population in a community college classroom.

The students in my classroom may ultimately be headed in any of the four directions noted by AACC, yet, as a class with an array of personal goals, we find one unifying goal in what Ellen Cushman declares is the calling of all English teachers: to help students “use language and literacy to challenge and alter the circumstances of daily life” (12). This is the reason the adult students are returning to school, and therefore, this is the definitive outcome the developmental education classroom at the community college aspires to meet.

The Language Instinct, Its Development, and Tie to Literacy

Before entering the classroom and meeting this year’s students, what I know from my studies in language theory by linguists such as Steven Pinker, Stephen Krashen, and Douglas Brown is that human beings are born with an incredible instinct for language. Naturally, asserts Pinker, we have the ability to learn a language, and easily speak and understand several pidgins, creoles, accents, and regional dialects of our mother tongue (5-6). In fact, we can create and add to that language as we adopt new expressions in pop culture or create a new saying among friends; and yet, our creations are comprehensible to others who speak the same tongue, even a variety of that tongue. Therefore, as children enter primary school, they come already equipped with a range of language skills in a variety of dialects,

depending on their home environment, sociolinguistic education, and exposure to the dialects of English.

Nevertheless, while the instinct is present, it needs to be honed and nurtured in order for it to be fully functional as one reaches adulthood. This fully functional language instinct is a verbal demonstration of one's literacy in a language. The language instinct that leads to literacy is honed and nurtured through cultural exposure to literacy activities in many facets of society. It is this exposure that leads to language acquisition in our primary language, according to Krashen's input hypothesis, wherein the "caretaker speech" from those around the child, i.e. parent to child, teacher to student, etc. is instrumental in primary language acquisition (22-23). This theory is built off of earlier work by Brown and others who researched the role of parents in language acquisition of small children and observed the natural communication used in home cultures (as referenced in Krashen 11).ⁱ

Many adult students who are labeled "illiterate," and therefore placed in developmental education classes, have not been afforded this sociolinguistic education and exposure in the formal dialect of English which is the measure of literacy in America. The state identifies them through a specific definition of "literacy"; according to the National Assessment of Adult Literacy (NAAL) compiled by the Institute of Educational Sciencesⁱⁱ, an adult is considered literate in America when he or she can demonstrate both task-based and skill-based literacy in formal English. In other words, for an adult to be assessed as literate, he or she must show

an ability to perform everyday literacy tasks such as “balancing a checkbook (quantitative literacy), filling out a job application (document literacy), or finding information in a news article (prose literacy),” and they must demonstrate “knowledge and skills an adult must possess in order to perform these tasks” (Institute of Educational Sciences). The definition further specifies, a literate adult is able to demonstrate skills and knowledge specific to tasks they will meet within academic, professional, and civic society. These tasks require formal language skills in what is called formal, Academic English (AE for this paper) through both written and verbal communication.

This brings up the question of how many adults are included under the “illiterate” identification. According to the 2003 NAAL, 11 million Americans were illiterate in English; 7 million of which were not considered hampered by a “language barrier.” This means that in 2003, 7 million Americans who speak English as their primary language were not literate in the formal, expected adult use of that language: AE. Within this statistic, the government institution does not further break down this number into those who are identified as having a disability that may hinder literacy and those who do not. In this paper, I will be addressing the students who, by adulthood, have not acquired literacy in their primary language, and I will be looking at their primary language acquisition environment as a prime factor.ⁱⁱⁱ

For the purposes of exploring the issue of addressing adult literacy in the community college for native speakers of English, I will begin with presenting a

theory of why the language instinct was not honed in the home and school environments and what that means to literacy; then move to the theories and pedagogy posited by the scholars in the area of adult literacy, showing the connection between AE acquisition by native speakers and second language learning; and finally, I will demonstrate how the theories can be put into practice in a developmental education classroom through a sample unit which is grounded in English language learning curriculum.

CHAPTER 2

ENGLISH SPEAKING ADULTS LEARNING ENGLISH

Because I am focusing on the lasting effects of the lack of sociolinguistic and cultural education in native English speakers, I will not be addressing other elements in the classroom that add to the diversity such as English as a second or other language learning or identified learning or physical disabilities.^{iv} Rather, for the purpose of focusing on the language and literacy issues of native English speakers, I will categorize the causes of students not acquiring literacy through sociolinguistic education and exposure for this study into two very general categories of home cultures: 1. Those who have been physically away from society for a long time and are returning; and 2. Those who have been emotionally and psychologically removed from society's inherent language learning due to environmental factors. I am looking at these two groups of students rather than narrowing my lens to one population's needs or broadening to all students in my classroom because they represent a significant number of the students community college teachers educate in the classroom and they are those whose linguistic home culture and school culture do not match as described by Fillmore and Snow. They have not been successful in their education even though they are speakers of the dominant language in American schools and do not share in common reported learning disabilities.

Category One

The first category this paper attempts to identify includes those who were physically absent from society during the important sociolinguistic and cultural learning years from older youth to early adulthood. They enter adulthood stunted in language literacy and expression in AE at the age when they “left” society. This leaving can stem from numerous circumstances, but the most obvious physical absences from sociolinguistic settings that mainstream society provides are when a youth is put into a correctional institution or when a young adult joins the military. So, I begin with a look at these two institutions as examples of a removal from a cultural context in America within which one’s language instinct, as defined by Pinker, develops to the point of literacy in AE.

Correctional institutions, whether they are for juveniles or adults, were historically described by Foucault as having the goals of disciplining or training people; and he asserts, these goals extended into society, specifically through military training and education in the 19th and 20th centuries. He exposed the desire in much of Western society to “normalize” the masses or to create “docile bodies” based on the Panopticon, his embodiment of the Western prison systems (195-197). In a similar way, boot camp, in every military branch, disciplines men and women to obey without question and trains them to lose the self for the whole of the group because of what Phillip Smith posits is the military’s dependence on “small group solidarity, the construction of a soldierly identity, and the enlistment and control of emotions” (275).

Both institutions then become systems that educate what Foucault called “docile bodies.”

These theories of how society looks at the shaping or normalizing of imprisoned citizens and military men and women are important when it comes to those who are reentering society. Both prison and the military create very structured environments that stifle personal expression and even punish for questioning authority. When one, who has spent much of their early adulthood in this type of culture, enters a post-secondary classroom where participation is required and writing is based on making strong assertions about one’s personal views and/or reactions to content in the classroom, it can seem like a foreign world; they learned to be adults through obedience, and then are asked to critically analyze in the college classroom. On a linguistic level, their expressions are formed within the very rigid culture which does not match the exploratory academic setting of an American college.

This is certainly more profound for the ex-convict student who had no release for any number of years than for the military student who has to learn to culturally switch between military life and home life throughout his career, that is, after basic training where they are isolated for anywhere from nine weeks to six months. The prisoner does not get the furlough that allows him to remain sharp in civilian life like military personnel. Therefore, this profound silencing of prisoners can become debilitating for them in the classroom and does not prepare them for post-secondary education or life in mainstream society (Larson). This is supported by Hartnett,

Wood, and McCann's work when they explain that even after leaving prison, "prisoners who return to their communities are functionally stripped of their citizenship, as they are often unable to vote and almost universally undesirable to potential employers, hence suffering the dual fate of both electoral and 'labor disenfranchisement'" ("Turning Silence" 334). Teachers, such as Hartnett, who instruct them note their reluctance to participate and resistance to critical analysis of course material due to this systematic silencing and disenfranchisement from greater society. A student in my class defined the problem clearly for me, and inspired this study, when he said, "I've been in prison since I was 15. I'm 23. I haven't spoken up in class because I'm afraid of how it will come out. I'm in a half-way house, and how I have to talk there is not ok for here, I know." Learning to communicate as a good prisoner does not prepare one for communicating as a good student.

The systematic silencing of teenaged and young adult prisoners teaches them skills that are appropriate for the prison yard, where safety and survival is a key concern, but it takes proper scaffolding and practice to adapt that skill to an academic realm. In other words, one focus in education of ex-prisoners needs to be the discovery and development of this literate voice (Hartnett *Incarceration Nation*). In "Turning Silence into Speech and Action," Stephen Hartnett explains this further:

The artistry of agency, then means using the teaching of writing and public speaking to men and women who have spent their lives feeling silenced, or ignored, or incapable of self-expression, as a vehicle for helping them to envision themselves not only as better writers and communicators, but also as empowered citizens, as eloquent agents of change (335).

This loss of self- expression and identity, essentially their dignity, is documented in political prisoners by Paul Gready, who speaks of authority “rewriting” political prisoners through the numerous documents that define the person and the act within the judiciary system. I would assert that his “rewriting” of the prisoner by those in power pervades all prison models, not just political prisoners. They are essentially rewritten into a powerless position. For example, one of my initial observations when working with students who were ex-convicts is their reluctance to make eye contact with instructors, those in power within a class. As I spoke with a few of them about it and worked in the classroom to make eye contact a part of their interaction with others, especially myself, I found that this gesture had been used to show recognition of a guard’s or another convict’s authority, rendering them shy and seemingly complacent. The students who have learned this type of hierarchy of communication must learn to assert themselves in appropriate ways in academic and professional society.

The research of prisoner’s power play in language is expounded upon by Jennifer Waite in her study where she concluded that prison communication defines the person and asserts their position in the hierarchy of the prison culture: i.e. an “inmate” is of lower status than a “convict” (1-3). Every word is used to manipulate power, to establish position, or to hold one’s ground. This type of conflict-rousing communication offers only disruption to an academic or professional environment. A

new structure of speech, or speech code discussed in depth in Chapter 3, must be introduced to these students: one that allows for dissent and welcomes disagreement on an equal plane.

On the other hand, with military students, the concern is less in *giving* literate voice than it is in *allocating* time for their own voice as they return from very dramatic and violent war zones. Today, with multiple wars being fought, there are few who return to school without having seen battle within the past few years. As these students return from war, they need opportunities to express and work through the experiences that they have had: the loss of fellow soldiers in the line of duty, their own injuries, and their understanding of how school and home cultures are different from the one they left behind at war (“A ‘Multiple Sources’ Summary”). Creative and expressive writing, such as the study of poetics, is an important part of this exploration and critical awareness of the duality of their life. Without opportunities to express and work through experiences that do not match the morals and norms of the culture they are re-entering, veterans can have difficulty making the transition back home.

However, I found that while the opportunities in poetics and expressive writing can be there, I need to be cautious when encouraging students to explore their feelings about their experiences until they are ready. In my first semester at the community college, one soldier announced he was going to describe the roadside bombing he survived, and that put pressure on another who was not ready to revisit

his battle memories. In conferencing, I found the second soldier reluctant to produce writing. When I suggested he choose a different topic, such as his favorite childhood home or something uplifting, he found that his drafting became much easier. With returning military men and women, rather than giving voice to an individual, classrooms can be occasions for expression as the students grapple with experiences unique to those who have gone to war as a part of their cultural education into every day civilian life, as they are ready.

In both cases of physically leaving society for a period of time, whether for war or prison, these young people learned to be adults in a culture very different from the mainstream society of America, and their difficulties in expressing themselves through verbal and written language demonstrate just how different their cultural education has been.

Category Two

The second category I will define are those who, while not physically removed from society, are affected in a similar way. Psychological and emotional withdrawal during teen years can also result in a lack of sociolinguistic learning. They may be present in the classroom and in the culture of mainstream society, but their minds are elsewhere. Within this category, there are various reasons for the physical presence with lack of mental presence. I am speaking about those who have been left out of society, labeled “other” from the norm, or those who withdraw themselves from the cultural settings that teach adult communication. This would

include those who suffered from drug or alcohol addiction, dropped out of school at an early age, or were outcasts at school for any sort of “otherness” in the dominant culture of their schooling.^v For while schools can offer a nurturing environment for Pinker’s language instinct development, the reality is that many students are not included in the socialization that occurs in these settings. While it seems a broad category, in my classroom I see common needs that classify them: to be given the opportunity as adults to develop literacy skills at the mature level to display their knowledge in a safe environment through practice of a variety of modes/genres and to be prepared for the analytical discussion and product creation of a post-secondary classroom.

For these students, the classroom itself has often been a hostile environment that has stifled their voice and silenced them, leaving them with low literacy skills. These young adults, finding fewer opportunities for employment with their current education in the midst of the most recent recession, re-enter the education system. Recent studies, such as an observation by Betts and McFarland, find that “Community college enrollments...tend to rise as the economy worsens” (as referenced in Fry). The requirement for higher education in a more competitive employment market brings many students back to school, even those who may have previously found no value in it.

For some of them, the social issues within the culture of secondary school combined with the immaturity of the teenaged brain led to bad decisions so that they

did not gain the education offered them. For example, alcohol or drug use that starts in the teen years can steer students away from their learning goals. Further, the physical effects on the brain of continued substance abuse in developmental years can affect their ability to gain education and acquire language. In fact, science has shown that the development of the brain continues into the early to mid-20's, and those who take psychoactive substances during the teens and early twenties can "alter or damage the development of the adolescent brain" (Science and Management of Addiction). More specifically, the effects to the neurotransmitter function and the alterations in perception can cause a young adult to misread information and, therefore, affect the new information that is brought into the brain through education (Science and Management of Addiction). This can include the sociolinguistic acquisition that occurs at this age, and therefore, these students can find that they are ill-equipped to perform the daily tasks in adult life due to lack of ability in recognizing the mature language contexts and producing products with the formal speech codes (AE) required for those tasks.

Also, life events such as a teen pregnancy, recognition of one's sexual identity, or a tragedy within a family such as death, severe injury, or the splitting of a family through divorce, can all take precedence over education in the very emotionally driven time of the teen years. When adult issues hit teens, who still function on a child's level intellectually and emotionally, they are ill-equipped to handle it. As Temple University Psychology Professor Laurence Steinberg puts it "A

teenage brain is like a car with a good accelerator but bad breaks” (qtd in Ritter 1). This lack of maturity in teen brains often cause them to shut out school as they focus on prevailing life issues, and that can have lasting effects on their educational performance and AE acquisition. Once the brain matures and the teen becomes an adult, they seek ways to reenter the educational environment and catch up from their difficult childhood. These intelligent, yet low-educated, adults have much catching up to do, and much of the developmental education for them is to equip them with adult level AE literacy.

Their behavior or personal circumstances are not the only ways of being mentally absent from the education while in K-12 school; peers can directly affect students’ ability to learn. When students are left out of the active learning environment of a high school, most often through bullying, they miss the sociolinguistic and cultural education of schooling and may graduate with middle school language skills or lower. Bullied students are targeted for any number of reasons that are often beyond their control. For example, one of the most overtly targeted groups of bullied teenagers is those who are discovering their sexuality and self-identifying with their sexual identification as Lesbian, Gay, Bi-sexual, or Trans-sexual (LGBT) within the high school environment. Resources, such as “It Gets Better,” recognize the bullying specifically of LGBT students in K-12 schools across America, and even in name, suggests that the teen years are the most difficult for these students. In fact, their mantra on their “About” page is to “show young LGBT

the levels of happiness, potential, and positivity their lives will reach – if they can just get through their teen years.” The detrimental effects of bullying for any reason have been well documented, and there are many programs and resources aimed at limiting bullying and violence in schools toward all students (U.S. Department of Education). However, as teachers, we know that bullies are often hard to identify and that bullying happens outside of the classroom, but it affects dynamics within the classroom. According to Donna Cross, “Research has indicated that children who are bullied often suffer from a range of physical and mental health problems, including depression, anxiety, increased sleep disorders, and low self-esteem.” These issues, if not dealt with, can limit participation in the classroom of very capable students. Therefore, these students may graduate from high school with limited literacy that does not reflect their intelligence and abilities.

The above students in both categories vary in age, class^{vi}, culture, ethnicity, gender, religion or philosophy, sexual identity, life experiences, etc. and come to one classroom with a deluge of prior knowledge, various skills, and personal needs and goals. These are my students: those whom I have the privilege to teach.

Placement into Developmental Education

The developmental education students of these categories are identified by literacy level as they enroll in community college through a very concrete placement system. Within the community college system across the country, standardized tests, as determined by each state, are used to demonstrate the level of literacy of

prospective students. According to the standards set by the Colorado Commission of Higher Education, Colorado uses the ACT, SAT, and the ACCUPLACER for such placement. Placement is determined by scores on each test. For example, those who score below 430 on the reading portion of the SAT (17 on ACT) or 440 on the English portion (18 on ACT) are placed in developmental education classes. The further break down into 030, 060, and 090 levels of developmental education is determined by the placement scores on the ACCUPLACER set by the Colorado Community College System.

Identified as not ready for college level courses, these students must successfully complete the developmental education classes before fully entering post-secondary education. What the tests in reading and writing tell educators and the CCCS is that these students have reached adulthood without honing the language instinct through their sociolinguistic education and exposure, and now they, as adults, are in need of gaining literacy in the formal dialect of their primary language, AE. These are the K-12 students who the media discusses as “falling through the cracks” or being “left behind” by our educational system. While these statements are simply finger-pointing, examining adult illiteracy through the language acquisition lens offers a more complete understanding of the literacy issue and will more accurately lead to better practices when it comes to adult literacy classes.

This lens requires that I step back to understand not only what my students are lacking, but also what the students bring to the class: the language instinct that is

present from childhood. Pinker and Brown explore primary language acquisition and the connection of exposure to that language in acquiring various dialects from childhood to adulthood. It is this lens through which theorists such as Krashen look at adult second language learning as a beginning point in understanding how to best acquire a language in adulthood. I, however, want to look through the lens in the reverse way: what do we know about second language acquisition that helps us to understand primary language literacy in adults?

For one, assuming primary language sociolinguistic education and exposure opportunities exist throughout society limits the scope of understanding the acquisition of AE, which is not used in many sub-cultures in America. Therefore, while linguists such as Pinker and Brown explain how primary language is acquired through naturally occurring exposure throughout a typical American child's development, what is missing is the realization that many children and young adults in our country are not exposed to typical situations for formal dialects of English in their home culture. Yet, their primary language theories do mirror, and perhaps led to, what Ferris and Hedgcok point to as one of the most fundamental principles of adult second language learning: "students learn more efficiently when abundant and meaningful input is available" (39). Hence, it is exposure to a language, whether that is a dialect of one's primary language in a home culture or a second language through emersion or classroom instruction, that leads to proficiency and literacy in that language. Acknowledging the connection in the theories of primary language

acquisition and adult second language acquisition, I would posit that adults not exposed to AE in their home culture are, in essence, acquiring a second language; gaining literacy in America is adding AE to a student's language range.

For that reason, as a part of the literacy classes in developmental education, I strive to offer "abundant and meaningful input" as a part of the curriculum for both reading and writing tasks. To get an idea of what this input might look at, it is helpful to explore the Teaching English as a Second or Other Language (TESOL) literature in this area.

Both Categories Struggle with Issues Shared by their ELL Peers

Others, who work with similar populations as I do, have recognized this need for sociolinguistic and cultural education in native English speakers as well. One work that inspired me to begin this exploration was Ellen Cushman's "The Rhetorician as an Agent of Social Change," in which she reflects on her own journey of teaching within an urban setting where the lack of literacy was a barrier between her students and active civic participation. She calls composition teachers to a "scholarly activism, which facilitates the literate activities that already take place in the community" (13). Cushman asserts that by bringing community activities into the classroom, teachers can "affect social change, something more along the lines of civic participation" (7). Her proposition supports what Hartnett, Wood, and McCann, saw within prisons and labeled as the "new pedagogy of empowered citizenship"

(348). Ultimately, both of these works agree with Bruce Herzberg, who also found a sense of civic duty in teaching writing as he explains:

The effort to reach into the composition class with a curriculum aimed at democracy and social justice is an attempt to make schools function...as radically democratic institutions, with the goal not only of making individual students more successful, but also of making better citizens, citizens in the strongest sense of those who take responsibility for communal welfare. (as qtd. in Cushman 12)

It is interesting that they are all concerned with citizenship and civic participation, an issue familiar to ELL students who are immigrants to the United States. In this way, both populations, those who are limited in their literacy in AE and immigrants learning English, share the need to be welcomed as a part of the mainstream American culture by gaining recognized citizenship through literate activities of daily life such as voting and employment, privileges difficult for both of them to acquire.

Another shared experience between the students in the two categories defined for my study and those coming to America as immigrants is the phenomenon of culture shock, defined by Brown, as these adults attempt to perform daily tasks in American culture with limited knowledge and skills in AE (183). Entering adult academic and professional life can seem like stepping into a new culture. The familiar though hostile environment of K-12 school is no longer there, and they must learn to function in a broader civic, professional, and academic settings. While participation in these setting may be the desired goal of the adult student, often they find they are ill-equipped for the communicative expectations of said environments.

Even though English is their primary language, they go to the adult professional world (a new culture) and discover that their skills will limit their choices of profession and civic participation. The biggest challenge they meet is an assumption that their language skills reflect their intelligence, especially because they are native English speakers.

Adults in the developmental education classes are aware of their limited knowledge in AE and their difficulties in adapting to formal speech codes. In fact, the student I mentioned earlier, who had been in prison since he was 15, expressed anxiety about this very phenomenon. He told me that he was hesitant to participate in class because he was “afraid of how it will come out” in front of the other students when he was nervous. His separation from main stream society while he was in prison did not afford him the typical language development that various cultural settings would have offered him. Instead, he felt linguistically isolated from his peers in the college classroom. He understood the language of the classroom, but was unfamiliar with the production of said language. This is not an unusual phenomenon, for Brown pointed out in his research in the 1980’s that children understand their parents’ communication long before they are ready to produce communication themselves (as referenced in Krashen). This student was well aware of his limited ability to communicate within the formal paradigm of college, employment, and civic activity; yet, his expression also points to another aspect of the communication barrier he was experiencing: anxiety. Not only was he aware that his form of English

differed from the academic setting expectations, but his word choice “afraid” shows the anxiety of these adults to participate in civic life. This is what Brown calls “cultural stress,” and thus, students feeling this stress can further isolate themselves, again limiting their exposure to settings where AE is used, which is vital to acquisition.

However, by enrolling in the developmental education class, they work past this cultural stress and begin the process of enculturalization, described by Brown, through the arduous work to reach their potential and try again to re-enter society (195). Language acquisition in the area of AE is a large part of this. Their language must be developed so that their expression is able to match their intelligence as they are empowered as citizens within the larger mainstream adult society.

Further connections can be seen when looking back through the lens of familiarities between primary language acquisition and second language learning as I turn to modern language learning research such as Ferris and Hedgcok. In their book *Teaching ESL Composition* they identify five features of “Knowledge of Language and Writing Systems” for ELL writers that set them apart from native speakers who are in composition classes at the college level (22). Because they clearly classify the native speakers at the college level, I placed those who have been identified as “illiterate” in their primary language into their alternate classification of those not ready for college composition: ELL writers. I then checked for similarities between my students and the ELL writers they studied. Of the five features, I find that the

native English speaking students in the categories I have identified for this paper present with all five.

Feature number one from Ferris and Hedgcok, students “begin with an intact L1 and a developing knowledge of spoken and written English as a second language,” addresses the students looked at here because it recognizes that they have a home language that is already intact and some knowledge or exposure to the second language they are learning: AE (22). As an example, I look to the young mother who has an active social life among peers with whom she successfully communicates in a dialect of English, but is unable to secure a profitable job due to her language performance in the interview setting. Through media, she is aware of formal AE construction, but does not have the skill set to construct communication using it herself. Another example, which shows just how the knowledge of AE can be limited by society, is a homosexual young man in one of my classes who told me that he did quite well in school until high school, when his parents threw him out in response to the knowledge of his sexual identity, and he lived in a car for almost two years. This young man tested at the literacy level of about eighth grade, when his home life was disrupted and his school life became secondary to his personal life. Clearly, he had exposure to AE and developing knowledge, but it was limited by life issues.

Ferris and Hedgcok’s features number two and three present together in the developmental education classroom. Two is that ELL students are “simultaneously acquiring language and composing skills.” The third feature states that students “may

or may not be familiar with the Roman alphabet and thus still may be acquiring English graphemic and orthographic conventions”(22). The students I am addressing in this work must learn the formal academic rules of AE while improving basic composition skills in general, as they have not produced academic writing in a number of years. In fact, some of the students in my classroom have had little exposure to written communication; many have never sat before a computer or read an entire book. One particular student, a 47 year old ex-convict, bought his first computer when he enrolled, but it sat in the box for an entire semester until he completed a basic computers class and could confidently hook it up and turn it on. So, while their verbal skills represent a limited exposure to one dialect, their written communication skills in AE are almost non-existent due to complete lack of exposure. As a result, these students are learning to write, even to the point, for a few of them, of understanding how the red and blue lines on notebook paper are to be guidelines for where to write within margins or how to set up a Word document on the computer. In reading, they can often decipher individual words to read aloud through phonics, but to give meaning to the words or link them together as a complete sentence is a difficult task. If they have not completed a novel or a long passage of academic text in the past, the construct of such a writing is not familiar to them. Further, understanding punctuation and other graphemic and orthographic as they enter the developmental education classes.

Finally, their fourth and fifth features present together as well. They state that students “may produce sentence-level errors influenced by their primary language” and that students “may have L1 related rhetorical knowledge that could facilitate or possibly inhibit the learning of English rhetorical conventions” (22). The students who speak a dialect of English have similar differences in syntax and usage as non-English speakers. For example, we can see this in African American Vernacular English (AAVE) with the habitual “be” to infer a condition of often or always such as in “She be late”, which in AE would be stated as “She is often late.” Another example in this same dialect is the use of the double negative which is a feature shared by French speaking students; an example is in AAVE the sentence “I didn’t say nothing” compared to the French “Tu dis jamais rien” which translates literally as “You say never nothing” (Hana). Therefore, many of the differences in conventions can directly correlate with those of English language learners. For instance, I had one student who confidently wrote a descriptive paragraph about his favorite place, his grandmother’s house in Kentucky, in his home dialect, Southern American English. However, as I went to evaluate the paper, I found I had to read it aloud in order to understand the phonetic spelling and make meaning from the syntax of the writing. It was as though I was reading a Mark Twain novel and stumbling over his use of dialectal dialogue that so masterfully portrays the characterization of regional Americans in his work. In an academic setting, however, dialectal differences can translate into errors in a formal paper.

In conclusion, while there are differences between English language learners and native speakers who struggle with AE, such as the fact that the latter has had some exposure of formal dialects of American English through media, the education they have had, and other experiences in society, their similarities show above give me a reason to bridge the two through pedagogy. The features of ELL students correlate with the literacy issues of a native speaker who has not had enough exposure to AE in their development of their language use. Gaining language proficiency is the foundational step in adult students' effort to "challenge and alter the circumstances of daily life" through their enrollment in the developmental education classes at a community college (Cushman 7). Therefore, studies in second language learning give us a more complete understanding of what illiteracy is for English speaking adults in American society. Finally, as we leave this section, I acknowledge that my classroom examples do not constitute the empirical research of this area on which large scale changes can be made; however, they do provide me with noteworthy first hand evidence to support the research and to give guidance for creating curriculum that facilitates sociolinguistic education in adult literacy classes.

CHAPTER 3

THEORIES AND PEDAGOGIES OF AE LITERACY

Speech Codes In Language Acquisition

Beginning with sociolinguistic education, I have established the idea that exposure is a key feature in acquiring a language. Therefore, I begin this chapter with a look at what that exposure means across dialects of English. The basic element in sociolinguistic exposure of various dialects within a country such as America, where there are many dialects of the principal spoken language, is what has been termed by Ellis and Maoz as “speech codes.” Speech codes refer to the underlying culture and context that drives the use of language in a communication setting (246). This context and cultural connotation of language can include jargon within a specified field of study or it can refer to the complete structure of a dialogue between members within a group, culture, or subculture. Because the literacy definition in Chapter 1 includes references to settings such as academic, professional, and civic society, understanding the formal speech code of AE is vital to acquiring literacy in American English.

Again, a link to second language learning can be drawn as speech codes are also essential to ELL curriculum. From a TESOL point of view, or more specifically, from the social constructionist theory of TESOL, “the audience or target discourse community largely determines knowledge, language, and the nature of both spoken

and written discourse” (Ferris and Hedgcok 8). While this is overtly taught in the ELL classroom, for native speakers of English, this is the skill that is typically attained during development of one’s language instinct through exposure to various language settings in completing daily tasks of civic and educational life. The students in the categories I am discussing have not had typical exposure experience due to their limited variety of sociolinguistic environments as children. Then, when they take the placement tests, they find it is the demonstration of a clear recognition of the formal audience and awareness of academic audiences’ expectations that is a factor in determining literacy in their native language. If literacy is defined by being able to perform these tasks to specific, formal (academic, professional, and civic) discourse communities, then speech codes become quite significant in expressions both verbal and written.

Typical Sociolinguistic Development at Home

For the typical person raised in American society, these speech codes are taught from a very young age in our home culture. The idea that culture is taught through language and that language is constructed through culture was discussed earlier in the culture of prison, through the work of Waite wherein she talked of the hierarchy of social strata being defined by word choice, and by my own observations where body language was habitual in demonstrating this social structure (see pages 11-12). This is substantiated by research in primary language learning in home cultures around the world using children’s literature. For example, as Nisbett points

out, one only has to look at the verbiage of children's primer books to understand that sociolinguistic context, whether it be of a collective or individualistic culture, for example, is deeply-rooted in the upbringing of children. He gives the contrasting examples of an American book reading, "See Dick run" and a Chinese book that reads, "Big brother takes care of little brother" (135). Both of these sentences can easily be translated into either language without losing literal meaning. However, true comprehension of these sentences requires contextual analysis. The first shows a focus on individual accomplishment while the second expresses the relationship between individuals: a value emphasized in more collective societies such as in China. In other words, cultural expectations such as individual relations in connection to others and to self is identifiable in home cultures' literature as expressed through the language at an early age. Cultural norms are expressed through distinct speech codes and therefore, the home culture of a person determines their initial exposure to how language is formed for communication, down to the syntax and word choice which are the elements that create speech codes. Not only have my students often experienced little exposure to reading in their home culture, but the separation from society explained in both categories during their teen and early adulthood has caused them to further miss out on the typical sociolinguistic education and exposure to AE needed for participation American adult society.

Sociolinguistic Education Beyond the Home Environment

Ideally, through school, children are further introduced to a number of language settings and have the opportunity to come together with other children who have a variety of dialects, accents, home languages, and cultural speech codes. Through learning together, socializing, and increasing the exposure to communication outside of their home, children grow in their language skills in what Pinker would describe as a natural evolution of our language instinct (245). In order to enhance the development of the natural language instinct by offering opportunities in the classroom, K-12 teachers must understand how language development works. For, it is within the multi-cultural, multi-lingual situation of American public schooling that Fillmore and Snow recognize how imperative it is for all teachers to understand language and language development. They suggest in their journal article “What Teachers Need to Know About Language” the following:

Teachers play a unique role as agents of socialization- the process by which individuals learn the everyday practices, the systems of values and beliefs, and the means and manners of communication of their cultural communities...When the cultures of home and school match, the process is generally continuous...But when there is a mismatch between the cultures of home and school, the process can be disrupted. (11)

When these two cultures (home and school) match, students experience a period of maturity from mid-teens to adulthood when they are culturally educated about mature sociolinguistic literacy through not only academic settings, but also at home, in early job experiences, and extra-curricular activities. As they grow through these years,

they are presented with more formal language situations and learn to code switch, change from one speech code to another, without direct instruction. While still under the care of parents, as the circle of relationships with adults expands outside the familial relations, students learn to read the cues of more mature situations and are given a safe environment in which to practice formal language expressions as they develop through high school and into college or employment. During this time much of American society enters adulthood with a fluency in AE as well as a few regional or cultural vernacular dialects of American English. Thus, they are considered literate by government definitions as set out by the NAAL.

In contrast, when these home and school cultures do not match, such as in the case with the illiterate adult who has been physically or psychologically absent from these cultural settings, Fillmore and Snow suggest a disruption occurs in the sociolinguistic learning, even with students whose home language is a dialect of English (11). Further, if teachers are not knowledgeable about language and language development, those with little exposure to AE can begin to fall behind and find school frustrating and demeaning rather than a place to flourish and grow. These students, without proper sociolinguistic education, may drop out of school at the critical age before adulthood or fall to situations which drive them from the education system as in those who fall into Category 1, or they might be “checked out” while remaining in the classroom as defined in Category 2. This can lead to an identification of illiterate as an adult when the tasks are presented in AE.

At the point when the adult student returns to the classroom, he struggles with sociolinguistic development just as a non-native speaker does. Ferris and Hedgcok explain as part of their socioliterate ELL theory, there are many literacies and all of them are “embedded in sociocultural contexts”(46). It is the context of the literacy that needs cultivating in the classroom of the low literate native speaker of English. The socioliterate theory of ELL is relevant to the teaching of developmental education classes of adults who show low literacy in AE because it emphasizes the following:

That the acquisition of genre awareness and the ability to produce and reproduce genres necessitates both mastery of forms and mechanical operations and, perhaps more importantly, an appreciation of the complex psychological, sociocultural, educational, political, and ideological contexts in which texts are produced, transacted, challenged, and reformed. (Ferris and Hedgcock 47-48)

While we may recognize a language issue with those learning English in America, often we do not realize the language acquisition issues for many who are, in fact, English speakers. For those who reach adulthood without full literacy, the developmental education reading and writing classes at community colleges serve as a bridge back onto the track of education when they have stepped away from their goals. These classrooms can be enhanced and supported by recognition of the connection between language acquisition in a second language and acquisition of literacy in a formal dialect of one’s native language.

Further, this enculturation through language is appropriate to the study of an American post-secondary education setting which has specific language paradigms. When an adult student is enrolled in American college, there is an expectation by their academic audience that they produce texts that are “congruent with Anglo-American rhetorical paradigms” (Hinkel as qtd in Ferris and Hedgcock18). While Hinkel was addressing English language learners, it is interesting that he specified “Anglo-American,” or what I have identified as AE in this paper, as the expectation of post-secondary education, which then would include those English speakers not fluent in AE.

Code Switching

As adults in professional, educational, and civic settings, there is a level of appropriate code switching that is expected in order to express oneself in a literate manner to the broader audience of society. Often students in Categories 1 and 2 will not recognize the cues that their audience gives them about the formality of a situation if that situation is new to them, or they will not have the cultural competence to construct the expected language of a cultural environment which they have not experienced before.

An example of code switching within the adult professional world is explained in a study on what Adrian Akmajian calls “code adaptation” (279). He cites Willima Labov’s study done in New York department stores on the employees’ ability to switch between casual and emphatic styles of language depending on the

audience they faced. What Labov concluded was that those in his study who were of a higher socio-economic, and therefore assumed educational level, were more able to express themselves in AE when they recognized their audience was not from the dialectic region in which they worked. Taking cues from their customers such as the customer's dialect, perceived comprehension, and types of questions they were met with, the retail employees switched to a more general, decontextualized, speech code (AE). What was most interesting was that those who were in what he identified as middle class (working at Macy's), spoke with a heavy dialect when conversing casually, but corrected themselves when careful communication cues were noticed. However, those at the high class level (working at Saks) or those in his lower class (S. Klein employees), had a much smaller change in their speech code. The higher level because more of them spoke AE even in casual communication while at work (an appropriate environment for AE), and those in the lower level remained in their regional dialect, even at work. He suggests that this is because they had difficulty in the code switching or recognizing the need for it due to the lack of exposure to environments where AE was used (Akmajian 279-280).

This is the very phenomenon this paper addresses. If illiterate adults do not have the skills to communicate in AE, their job prospects are directly limited by this lack. Adding AE to their language range opens new professional avenues to them and brings about the altering of their daily lives that Cushman acknowledges is the reason they return to education through the community college. These students are in

need of learning the speech code that crosses regional boundaries and is representative of the professional world: AE.

Power of Prior Knowledge

Looking at adding AE rather than correcting their home language allows teachers to give value to students' prior knowledge and to see it as something to build off of rather than creating a new foundation. Therefore, before adding a more formal dialect to students repertoire, acknowledging the complexity of their home dialect of the English language is helpful. In fact, linguists have asserted for many years that all levels of language (dialects, creoles, and pidgins) have what Derek Bickerton calls a "grammatical complexity" which hints at our ability to adapt a language to a situation (qtd in Pinker 21). The fact that a less formal vernacular form of English has the underlying complexity, gives students prior knowledge they may not even recognize in themselves. Students who speak other dialects understand language, and they use conventions and grammar in a systematic way already; grammar is naturally occurring.

For example, children add grammar to a parents' Pidgin English so that the language mutates over generations as expressive needs change and grow. This allows for regular and predictable additions to the language. Pinker uses the example of the Hawaiian Creole that, over time, changed in form but maintained a complexity of grammar that was injected by the children, not the adults (20-23). This means that the ability to not only create language but also adapt it must be a part of our brain

naturally. While we might inherit a “broken language”, we instinctively “fix” it so that it becomes a rule-driven entity with the capacity to be taught to others who join our culture or social circle (23). This is the prior knowledge about language that the students bring with them, and their natural grasp of grammatical complexity of language needs to be recognized before instructing them.

Further, even if AE is not one of a student’s dialects, the foundations of English are there and she may code switch between other dialects as she has encountered various cultures throughout life. Choosing the speech code for a particular situation is so adaptable within our brains that we are close to being multi-lingual without learning anything but our native language. As stated earlier in this chapter, this code switching along with the acquisition of AE happens naturally for those who participate in education and mainstream society from older youth to adulthood; therefore, the students in the categories I defined have been absent from this natural acquirement of AE within American society, but they may have skills in code switching that can be built upon. Situational analysis can be scaffolded in the classroom by beginning with situations students have experienced and then going into situations where students have struggled, such as the formal situations of academia and employment.

Thus, when they return to education through the system of community colleges, or other developmental education settings, their individual language exposure can be a factor to their literacy identification. From the soldier to the single

mom to the teen dropout to the ex-convict to the recovering drug addict, each adult in the classroom has a unique prior knowledge of the English language which includes exposure to a variety of dialects, construction of specific speech codes, and limited code switching as taught in the home, school, and employment environments.

AE in the Classroom, Home Language at Home

As an instructor, I am faced with the challenge of teaching literacy in AE to English speaking adults. As stated in the previous section, my goal is to add AE to the already rich language abilities of students, and to share an understanding that home languages are appropriate for creative and expressive activities in the classroom, while AE is appropriate for formal and professional tasks. It is important to make this distinction clear: the goal is to add AE, not correct or replace the home language. This puts the developmental education teacher in the same role as a secondary language teacher.

In fact, students' ability to learn multiple dialects and to code switch is what led to a realization among educators; in recent years, teachers have abandoned the ideology of "labeling their home language as 'wrong'," and rather they focused on "teaching students to recognize the grammatical differences between home speech and school speech so that they are then able to choose the language style most appropriate to the time, place, audience, and communicative purpose" (Wheeler and Swords 197). In this way, teachers have come to understand the beautiful expression of the many dialects in our country and to not discount their use. We only need to

turn on the television or radio to experience the expressiveness of New England Dialect, Southern Dialect, Spanglish, or African American Vernacular English and what it adds to our artistic and common culture. We do not want the home language abandoned nor should we perpetuate the prejudice against home languages, for being bilingual is an asset to every student. This is especially important to remember in the adult classroom, where students may feel they have come to school to correct linguistic errors, and they may not recognize the value of their prior knowledge and life experience. These are building blocks for adult students, and should not be dismissed. What is to be addressed in the classroom is what Hinkel suggests for the ELL classroom, that students learn to “master the mechanical aspects of composing sentences, paragraphs, and larger units of discourse that correspond to the dominant genres of the academy, a specified field, or both” (qtd. in Ferris and Hedgcock 57).

The AE Dialect

To begin looking at the pedagogy of teaching adults, I look more closely at AE as a dialect since it is used to define literacy in America. Noting the “grammatical complexity” that Bickerton attributes to all levels of language, including dialects, pidgins, and creoles, as discussed above in the home language of my students, I reverse the lens to see that AE is also a complete language, with its own grammatical complexity. AE, then, being a dialect, has complex grammar, structures, vocabulary, etc. just as any dialect of a language one is learning.

Therefore, while a dialect, the learning of it is much like learning any level of a new language, and it is important to understand the qualities and features of that language.

In classrooms, AE is the common dialect among adults from diverse cultures and the instruction of AE has been a topic of much debate in educational circles. As established earlier, adults who are considered literate by our society are easily able to switch from a home language, be it any dialect of English, to AE when the occasion calls for it. AE is described by J. Cummins in a paper for the Department of Education as “cognitively demanding, its most obvious feature being that it is relatively decontextualized” (as quoted in Fillmore 20). The term “decontextualized” refers to the observable fact that it crosses over regions and dialects, through many contexts of American society. While the many cultures that come together in America utilize AE to communicate in professional and academic realms, at home many of us continue to use a regional or cultural dialect to communicate within our families and communities. In the classroom, a balance can be managed of creative expression in one’s home language with instruction in AE to prepare adult students for higher education, employment, as well as civic interaction across the broader American society.

While there are many examples of regional and cultural dialects of American English, one has continually returned to the discussion table in education: African American Vernacular English (AAVE). Perhaps because it is a dominant dialect in popular culture, AAVE is well known and a strong example of a home language that

is often dropped when the occasion becomes more formal or the audience is broad. While linguists such as Bickerton and Pinker agree that it is, in its own right, a fully developed language just as AE is a fully developed language, the discussion twenty years ago about bringing it into schools brought forward many who saw it as representing those who were uneducated and tied it to many negative connotations. Therefore, they did not want to perpetuate the learning of it in the classroom, as many opponents did not support the natural acquisition of multiple dialects. Either way, the decision was made that children who speak AAVE need to learn AE, just as much as the Southern Dialect Speaker, Mid-western Dialect Speaker, Spanglish Speaker or New England Dialect Speaker needs to learn AE for the academic realm (Ludden).

However, because AAVE crosses many cultures due to its use in popular culture, the discussion of its legitimacy has resurfaced, and therefore, it stands as a good example when looking at American cultural dialects in contrast to AE. Recently, AAVE has come up again because the Federal Drug Enforcement Agency is looking for a translator in AAVE (Ludden). A translator does indicate that the government recognizes that dialects can be as different as languages, and again, supports the idea that those illiterate in the AE dialect are learning a second language. In a discussion on this DEA decision with linguist John McWhorter on NPR, a caller from Georgia explained the child's mind in a classroom setting this way:

And I think the students here, when they see a teacher primarily who may be white, or even – not even white, but even black – like for example, for myself,

since I can kind of cold switch from [African American Vernacular English] and to maybe, I guess people say ‘job-interview’ voice or whatnot, and because of that, I may be looked at as upper class. (Ludden 5)

This term “cold switch” is interesting coming from a lay person. He recognizes that students instinctively (as the verbiage “cold switch” implies) know that the language of their neighborhood, home, or even school yard, may not be appropriate or understandable to a teacher who has been speaking a different dialect of English, whether that be Southern Dialect, Mid-Western, or African American Vernacular English. For, the teacher, whatever her primary speech code, will adapt to AE, or what this caller names “job-interview voice,” when he/she enters the classroom. This, in turn, seems to encourage the students to adjust their voices and sparks the instinct to analyze the sociolinguistic situation. The students discussed in this paper do not have literacy in this language, and so often, while the desire to switch is there, the cultural stress of not being able to produce appropriate communication silences them in formal settings, excluding them as participants in the setting.

While the impulse to code switch is natural, without exposure to the target dialect, students need direct instruction to not only acquire the new language, but also to recognize the cues that facilitate the need to code switch. These cues are summed up by Charmaine Kaimikaua as she explains in “Hooponopono: A Hawaiian Cultural Process to Conflict Resolution” that “what governs a person’s desire to switch linguistic codes is the subject of the conversation, the context of the conversation, and the gender of the conversational partners” (204). Not only do students need direct

instruction in the grammatical conventions of AE which will be addressed in Chapter 4; but also, on a more global level, direct instruction begins with cultural literacy and socialization, which includes the context clues and speech codes and then goes into the purpose for the learning which points to outcomes and objectives.

Bilingual in One Language

In another discussion about the African American Vernacular English translators for the DEA, Boyce Watkins, PhD, notes in an academic way what the caller into NPR pointed out: speakers of dialects, such as African American Vernacular English, naturally adapt their voice to their surroundings. In other words, looking at the two categories of students in this paper, if their surroundings have been limited by physical or psychological separation from formal language situations, while it is natural to adjust their speech code, they may not have the specific code required for a specific situation. Watkins, having been exposed throughout his life to both codes, AE and AAVE, asserts that, “most African Americans, especially those in urban settings, are expected to be at least partially bilingual. When I speak with my friends, I probably sound a lot different from the way a professor sounds when speaking to his white colleagues” (1). He recognizes that he instinctively rather than overtly changes the language he speaks in order to meet the audience he faces. Further, he is able to do this, being fluent in both dialects. He goes on to claim that this is a “form of intelligence” (2). I would have to agree with him, for communicating in various ways to meet various purposes and audiences is certainly a

rhetorical and literate intelligence that is fostered by the meeting of different environments as one grows and learns in the world around him.

Watkins further uses a personal example, his daughter, to show how one might nurture this type of bilingualism at home. He says that she speaks African American Vernacular English and that he corrects her “not because I don’t respect her creative use of the English language. Instead it’s because I just don’t see any reason to persuade her to communicate in a one-dimensional manner” (2). This speaks to the idea of becoming multi-lingual within one’s primary language which is the goal of the developmental education student.

Becoming multi-lingual within the context of our native language is an ability we all have and serves as a beneficial skill to continue to hone throughout our lives so that we learn to code switch from home language to formal language. For example, in my classroom, I had a student who, conveniently, came into class late on a day I was teaching speech codes through voice in writing. As he walked in, I turned to him and asked, “James, do you have your essay?” He said, “Oh Fu—, I mean, oh shi--, I mean...,” and he was at a loss for words. I turned to the class and said, “Here is a perfect example of someone who did not have time to switch his voice to one that is appropriate for his audience. James is still speaking with his friends out in the parking lot, not yet to his instructor.” They laughed and the lesson was learned.

AE has its place in America as a common form of communication that allows peoples of all races, religions, cultures, and native languages to come together for

community, employment, political stances, trade, and most everything that brings us together under the broad term of “American.” A question then remains: *How* do teachers best teach, not English to non-English speakers, but Academic English to dialect speakers?

Direct Instruction in Cultural Literacy and Socialization

If AE is a new language, then one aspect of the acquisition of that language is to teach the sociolinguistic facets and the cultural use of that language. The socialization and cultural literacy in developmental education entails much of the same instruction on cultural norms, cues, and situational analysis that secondary language instruction details.

ELL theorists, such as Ferris and Hedgcok, identify a “socially grounded perspective on literacy” in their discussion of English language learners, compiling the work of Cope and Kalantzis, Fairclough, Perez, and Zamel and Spack (47). In fact, working from this same research, they suggest a definition for “literacy” that includes not only the knowledge and skills in daily tasks as the NAAL does, but they expand it in the following way: “We have further suggested that literacies are multiple, that they are always embedded in sociocultural contexts and that they develop as a result of a dynamic interaction of verbal activities including reading, writing, and speech” (47). While they do not identify the same settings of academic, profession, and civic activity, they do generalize the sociolinguistic context of the communication as a part of literacy as well as the knowledge in comprehension and

the skills in production. These shared needs show that the cultural literacy is important to the education of adults in order for them to be considered literate in America.

With socioliterate development as an outcome, the ELL classroom often includes a genre study to give students exposure to several uses of the language in various cultural environments. Socialization in the literacy of a given field is vital as Ferris and Hedgcok recognize that “Mastering the interpretation of text (i.e., learning to read and make sense out of someone else’s writing) is a significant step toward achieving membership in the community of readers and experts for whom that text is meaningful” (50). It is this expanding of interpretation of text by understanding the rhetorical stance of a piece that increases literacy and language proficiency. As adult students are entering the post secondary classrooms, they will become a part of the community of readers and experts in a field of study. Perhaps the “membership in the community” is the identification of literate in the sense that it distinguishes one’s ability to fully communicate with a defined community.

One way to look at this socialization process is to teach the specific speech codes of the academic and professional cultures. For example, there is limited physical contact in formal settings, i.e. hand shaking instead of hugging is appropriate. Also, word choice such as referring to the last name of someone in a professional setting is a cue of a formal situation. While their home culture is one in which illiterate adults know how to relate to others, in the academic and professional

cultures, the power structure, speech patterns, and connectedness among members is something that needs to be taught. In other words, socioliterate development is not limited to the ELL student.

Another example of speech code development in an ELL class that has ramifications in the adult literacy class is that of Savignon and Sysoyev who teach, in their English class for Russian students, a sociolinguistic competence that includes “initiating contact, anticipating cultural misunderstandings, and using diplomacy in discussion” (qtd. in Brown 200). For my students, initiating contact is the un-silencing of the prisoner or the teaching of questioning to the military man or woman; anticipating cultural misunderstandings is seen when those who are defensive due to past injury find that they are quick to misjudge a situation as critical of themselves or, and they learn to back down and read the situation carefully before participating in it; and the use of diplomacy is taught in peer review, classroom discussion, and maintaining academic argument while avoiding fallacies, such as name calling or attacking the person, in a persuasive paper. In this way, much of my teaching is similar to second language and sociolinguistic teaching.

ELL theorists look at what works in native speakers’ acquisition of literacy and use it in ELL classrooms; as I flip the lens, these connections are relevant to those native speakers who are not culturally literate in the formal use of AE as defined by the adult daily tasks of American society.

Direct Instruction and the Purpose for Learning

Looking further into adult literacy in AE as a second language acquisition, there is an important factor that bridges the two pedagogies: purpose. In adult secondary language theory, there are specific purposes for their use of the second language that directs the pedagogy of the classroom. This is parallel to the listed reasons that an adult returns to the community college setting to prepare for post secondary education. Both of these situations require an analysis of the purpose for learning which may include career mobility, professional development, or increased literacy for cultural competence. Understanding the purpose for learning can shape the pedagogy teachers choose to use and instruction is overtly and directly aimed at the identified purpose.

I begin with the theories in ELL and bridge these theories to adult literacy in developmental education. “Language for a Purpose,” when an adult seeks language learning specifically for a narrowly defined use as in a job, as defined by Sandra Savignon, is a factor that needs to be addressed when considering the adult language learner (20). For example, an instructor might limit the classroom to specific learning skills that are used in the job or employment defined by a field of study and explicitly teach these skills through lecture, modeling, and practice. This type of learning is exactly what Johns and Price-Machado address in “English for a Specific Purposes: Tailoring Courses to Student Needs- and to the Outside World.” They break down the purposes an adult might seek English instruction into two categories: “English for

Occupational Purposes, particularly [Vocational] VELL and English for Business Purposes (EBP), and English for Academic Purposes (EAP)” (43). Both of these categories speak to a very different sense of fluency, and therefore, provide specific outcomes for the designers of these classes. These theories are intriguing when discussing adult literacy in AE with native English speakers because these are the classifications of students identified by the community college system who recognizes that the purpose for returning to school drives the type of education that the adult student will seek. The pedagogies of EBP and EAP speak directly to this population, for while they do not need to learn the conversational English an immigrant to American would want to acquire, their needs are similar to those learning English for a specific purpose within the professional and academic realms.

To this end, Ellen Cushman reminds us of the intention with which the adult returns to the classroom: to change their lives through education and job preparation. It is an immediate alteration in situation and stance that he or she seeks in improving English language skills in AE. In order to teach English for the specific reasons of daily tasks of adult literacy, Cushman suggests bringing the “literate activities that already take place in the community” into the language classroom (13). In this way, adult students are learning language use for a very specific purpose whether that is for job applications, housing letters, legal papers, or other circumstances in which they might find themselves. Students can identify these areas as they define personal goal that returning to school and improving literacy help to achieve.

This could be adapted to the educational level of the classroom and the specific purposes for each student. Because of their expectations for returning to school, adult learners must identify with a purpose for the lessons and articulate that as they enter the classroom. Goal setting and adjusting literate activities that they already participate in for the classroom gives them authentic practice in code switching to the adult communication world. With this pedagogy, we can reach what Cushman identifies as a teacher's calling: that we "empower" our students as we "facilitate people's oral and literate language use" (15). It is a matter of looking at how AE is used in the specific settings of academic, professional, and civic literacies, and bringing those uses into the lessons, and therefore, practicing code switching to AE in a very direct way.

CHAPTER 4

FROM THEORY TO PRACTICE

Needs Assessments in Developmental Education

When considering the students of a developmental classroom and the literacy issues they present with, one can better understand their prior knowledge and foundational skills by reviewing the process which brings them to this level of classroom. The placement into a developmental education class begins with a needs assessment based on reading comprehension and writing in AE. Upon completion of the course in which a student is placed, she is expected to meet the standard competencies at each level set by the Community Colleges of Colorado Systems before moving on to the college level courses.^{vii}

What is interesting between the developmental courses and the ELL courses within CCCS is that the competencies are parallel across these similar courses. For example, the Reading 090 course lists comprehension skills at the level of demonstrating an ability to “evaluate content reading passages critically”, “analyze reading to determine the adequacy and relevancy of support”, “analyze essay organization to identify thesis and major points and evaluate the effectiveness of argumentative writing” ; and the ELL Advanced Reading requires demonstration of the ability to “employ critical reading skills to evaluate, analyze, paraphrase, and summarize readings” and show “reasons for agreeing or disagreeing with a writer’s viewpoint” (See Appendix A; see Appendix B for Writing competencies). In other

words, at the end of both of these tracks, a student should be able to demonstrate skills needed for college level reading of formal English as defined by the comparable outcomes above.

Not only are the competencies parallel, but the prior knowledge of the students is similar: The English speaking developmental education student has a foundation of a dialect of English, and the ELL student has a foundation of a language other than English. This shared foundation of language is something that can be built upon in both classrooms with similar pedagogy. I do not suggest the classes be blended, as the activities will be further tailored to both Learner and Situation Variables (as explained in the next section), but the theories and practices can be shared among teachers in both areas. Throughout the rest of this chapter, I will present ways of utilizing the best practices in TESOL within the developmental education classroom of native English speakers.

Learner and Situation Variables

This parallelism of both competencies and prior knowledge is important to my discussion because it is from this point that a teacher, using these as a framework, creates curriculum and lays out a syllabus that will lead to students obtaining the skills outlined in the objectives laid out by the college, district, or other unifying entity (Ferris and Hedgcok 88-91, Brown qtd in Ferris and Hedgcok 88, and CCCS). As a teacher begins to define units that help students achieve the objectives, another pre-assessment may be given in order to identify individual needs through a

department common assessment or a teacher's own diagnostic exercise designed by herself. While the college entrance assessment is used for placement, these more individualized assessments are used to help design the course by understanding the individual strengths and needs of students in a particular classroom. Frodesen specifically identifies two variables that can help an instructor narrow her lesson: Learner Variables and Situation Variables (235-236).

Learner Variables are identified within "a very heterogeneous population, characterized by many differences in backgrounds and abilities, including linguistic, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds as well as cognitive and metacognitive strategy use" as well as Reid's consideration of learning styles (Frodesen 235). This idea of a learner-centered classroom is where I began this study, and where I explored the needs of my students as described above. Further, the learning styles can be used to choose specific instructional modes and activities as one begins specific lesson plans. For this study, the fact that my students had presented as illiterate on the ACCUPLACER and were in need of formal English is what drove my exploration into what teaching strategies I might find most effective with them in order to reach the college level reading and writing as defined by the CCCS Standard Competencies.

From analyzing the student assessments, I then turned to Frodesen's second variable: Situational Variables. These, she explains, are the situations in which the students will use the learning or the purpose of the learning as discussed earlier (236). For my students, I defined these as the academic, professional, and civic settings in

which they hoped to achieve better success with daily tasks expected of American adult citizens, such as those mentioned in the literacy definition: balancing a checkbook, voting, filling out a job application. Further, because I am focusing on the language learning of my students, as I begin to define teaching methods I will use, I look to Krashen who suggests adults learn language: 1. Implicitly or acquisition, and 2. Explicitly or learning (as cited in Brown 309). The implicit learning echoes back to how children acquire their primary language – through exposure. The second method, explicitly learning, is much more of a conscious attention to rules and the focus tends to be more on form than on communication (310).

With the unique variables of the developmental education class at a community college as well as the Standard Competencies expected for their successful enrollment into college level classes in mind, I decided to employ the strategies used in the ELL courses, with a balance of implicit and explicit instruction, as they met the linguistic needs of the students in the English speaking developmental education course as well; again I reversed the lens from utilizing primary language acquisitions theory in designing ELL curriculum to utilizing successful secondary language acquisition theory in designing literacy acquisition curriculum in one's primary language.

Curriculum for an Academic Purpose

Thus far, I have discussed the similarities in the theories of language acquisition in low literate adults and adult second language acquisition. Now, I

would like to suggest how the curriculum, including daily tasks, can be borrowed from the ELL classroom to benefit the language aspect of illiteracy in adults. For this practical look at theory in curriculum, I will explain and analyze a career unit that I have taught and adapted to several classrooms over the last two years of my teaching, showing how ELL theory was brought into practice in my developmental education classroom activities.

The underlying theory that motivates my practice is rooted in the sociolinguistics discussed in Chapters 2 and 3. While this is central in an ELL classroom, as posited by Ferris and Hedgcok in their assembling of several theorists, it is often set aside or forgotten in a primary language class. Perhaps this is because many instructors assume that students have been a part of the dominant culture, and are, therefore, familiar with the norms and linguistic expectations of that culture. However, the two categories of students I am discussing have frankly not been a part of the dominant culture, and are, therefore, in need of sociolinguistic education.

One of the techniques used for socialization in ELL adult classrooms is participation in simulations of professional and civic daily tasks. In fact, role modeling and practicing authentic daily tasks is supported by just about every ELL theorist I have cited in this paper. Relatedly, Proliteracy, a group focused on adult literacy classes, also advocates using goal setting and planning in an adult classroom with real life objectives from work related “fill out a job application” to home with “make a family budget” to community with “participate in a local civic organization”.

One such classroom activity is mock interviews and role playing in professional settings, which can help ELL students practice for adult daily tasks. Taking this idea from the language classroom and melding it with Cushman's initiative of employing "scholarly activism, [in the literacy class] which facilitates the literate activities that already take place in the community" (13), I developed my career unit for both my ENG 090 class and an Advanced Academic Achievement Strategies class that is partnered with the REA 090 at many Colorado community colleges. As I explain the unit, you will note that I use the first person plural pronouns when discussing activities because I model the steps as students perform them on their own project.

This career unit explores English communication in the professional world by creating a cover letter/resume and participating in a formal interview for a student's dream job in 5 years. The first lesson in this unit was to find a job posting for this dream job. Here we used the reading process as for our pre-reading, we discussed what we would expect to find in a job posting from their prior experience in job searches. By having them seek out real jobs, I allowed students to see authentic texts as suggested by Brown, Cushman, Ferris and Hedgcok. Further, looking at the Schema Theory of TESOL, one can find a similar philosophy of instruction in authentic daily tasks beginning with contexts and forms that are familiar to students and expanding the schemata by systematically introducing more difficult texts (Ferris and Hedgcok). This theory can speak to any context or form that the students need. For the developmental education class, this can be technology literacy. This is one

area where native speakers may differ from English language learners, in that many immigrants to America have previous experience with technology. In contrast, my students, for the most part, have sought employment before, but many of them have not used the internet nor have they looked for employment in the field in which they have not yet begun studies. So, while basing instruction on the Schema Theory, I tailored it to the unique needs of my students; the genre of texts for employment was familiar, and I used a scaffold by entering a professional setting and using technology.

It was after I taught this unit the first time that I learned how unfamiliar many of my students were with search engines, especially academic data bases, and with assessing the credibility of sources on the internet and, in reviewing my unit the next semester, I recognized the need for technological literacy instruction as well.

Utilizing technology is one important outcome of this class as many of my students do not have computers at home and are not comfortable manipulating the information on the internet beyond social media, the responsible use of which can also become a lesson. Therefore, I added a more supportive lesson as we explored job sites on the internet and narrowed to reliable and local job searches in our area. Once a job posting was chosen by every student, we critically read the posting to identify the important aspects of the job and the qualifications both required and preferred by the employer. As part of the reading process, we highlighted the key words, some of which will become our personal vocabulary list for this unit. The authenticity

created by the allowance of individualization within this unit helps to ground the class in the social advocacy that Cushman promotes as well as offer relevancy of education to a population that has found school to be not relevant in their prior experience.

Modeling of Conventions

The vocabulary list that each student creates will be necessary for the reading tasks in this unit as well as the writing, for they will be expected to use the words in context for writing assignments in the unit. Because of the speech codes as explained by Ellis and Maoz earlier in the paper, it is important for the students to create a vocabulary that is specific to the context and cultural connotation of language within a specified field of study; in other words, they are collecting the jargon of the professional community of which they are hoping to become a member. Vocabulary building ties to the CCCS Standard Competency of “word analysis, dictionary skills, context clues, and personal vocabulary improvement.” These competencies align with what researchers are doing in the field of adult second language acquisition and adult literacy such as Proliteracy who created a vocabulary series with activities in U.S. Customs, laws, and behaviors. This series, when partnered with *Living in America* by New Readers Press, addresses vocabulary and structure of community activities such as a doctor’s visit, financial responsibilities, civic duties, etc. (Mathews-Aydinli15). This is yet another example of sociolinguistic education for the native speaker.

The next step was to write a cover letter that addresses the posting using the vocabulary from the highlighting. At this point, instruction in code-switching became imperative as I needed to focus on “teaching students to recognize the grammatical differences between home speech and school speech so that they are then able to choose the language style most appropriate to the time, place, audience, and communicative purpose” of the professional world (Wheeler and Swords 197). Therefore, as students began the production of cover letters, I looked not only at professional voice and appropriate conventions, but also at how they used jargon used by the employer, and at whether or not the letter spoke specifically to the posting and the audience of the posting. Going through the writing process here, as well as direct instruction on the grammar they might use in the letter, drove the daily activities.

To be more precise about the grammar instruction, it focused on the formal language of the professional world and the modes of instruction imitated the modes of communication in that setting. So, grammar instruction is not skill and drill, but rather more of a melding of grammar and style to match professional speech codes. This is supported by the Center for Adult Language Acquisition (CAELA) which brings up the importance of grammar in the adult classroom for the purpose of continuing education to further employment as well. Mathews-Aydinli, a writer for CAELA, posits that general language skills picked up in immersion programs or social English learning “are not sufficient for adult learners to gain the level of

language competency needed for academic study” (2). Rather, due to the complexity of academic and professional language, in an ESP classroom, teachers are urged to focus not only on the features of a language during communicative activities, but also on what she calls “systematic teaching of grammatical features and rules for their use” (2). This, Mathews-Aydinli contends, leads to adult learners being better prepared for academic classes and she supports her claim with the following studies: Basturkmen, Loewen, and Ellis (2002), Ellis, Basturkmen, and Loewen (2001), Laufer (2005), Lim (2001), and Long (2000). (2). These studies show that for adult English Language Learners, grammar is important whether their goal is employment or further education. In line with this pedagogy, my class of native speakers studied the grammar and tone of a professional letter which naturally led to explicit instruction in punctuation, formatting, and sentence structure. These activities aligned with CCCS’ Standard Competencies of not only “editing for correctness”, but also “understanding and applying appropriate organizational strategies.” Ultimately, both the implicit and explicit aspects of this unit speak to Johns and Price-Machado’s English for a Specific Purpose, or more specifically: English for Business and Occupational Purposes versus English for Academic Purposes.

Goal Setting

Our third step in the career unit was to create a mock resume that matched the required and preferred qualifications. We were creating this for 5 years from now, so we could add education and experience we hoped to have in that time. Here,

we focused on recognizing the skills that we have and what we need to have to get where we are headed – hopefully, the resume can also act as a check list for our education planning. This step speaks directly to Proliteracy’s suggestion to set goals and look to the future purposes of the education in adult literacy classes. Also, we discussed professional etiquette in writing such as using someone’s title and last name, and when to initiate communication versus when to wait for a reply. Again, I employed the Schema Theory of TESOL, as my students were familiar with job applications for their present skill level, and I introduced the more difficult level of application which often includes a cover letter and resume that will be expected for employment in jobs that their higher education will make available to them.

Practice in an Authentic Setting

Finally, not limiting our language skills to reading and writing, the next step was to work on verbal skills: practicing interviewing techniques. For this step of the unit, students again turned to the technology available to them. They began by researching articles on interviewing skills and possible sample questions. The first time I taught this unit, I handed out the articles and had them all read the same ones, however, with my reflection that made me aware of their need for technology literacy, I had them do the research themselves the next time I taught it. In this way, they were able to practice the skill of assessing sources. Some language theorists suggest that using the computer also has implicit learning benefits. For example, Douglas Biber suggests that computers can “determine the grammatical features

shared by large numbers of spoken or written discourses within certain genres” (as referenced in Johns and Price-Machado 51). Computers can also be used to practice written forms of language common in the professional world such as proper letters, memos, emails, blogs, research, etc. Tailoring the technology lessons to uses in the professional world is also suggested by CAELA.

After the research on best interview strategies is shared among the students, they practiced mock interviews with one another using sample interview questions they had chosen from their research, and they gave feedback to their peers from what they had learned. This was in preparation for the 15 minute interviews that I set up with community members from several types of businesses. Bringing in real professionals is the pinnacle of this unit, for not only was their feedback supported with years of experience in interviewing, but the students found relevancy in the feedback from potential future employers in the safe environment of the classroom. Not only was I expanding their schema of language use by bringing in employers, but this practice is also supported by findings of McLaughlin who posits that language learners benefit from practicing with native speakers. He breaks language learning into two categories that are sorted by input, which he calls “acquisition heuristics”, and usage, which he calls “operating procedures”(321). Under the first category, McLaughlin suggests that the input or learning comes from the following: simplification, generalization, imitation, avoidance, and “operating principles” which he borrows from Slobin. Here he has listed many techniques that adult learners use

when grappling with a new language. He not only includes strategies given in a classroom, but also those used in the initial attempts at communicating in that second language, which further offers instruction from proficient native speakers. This is where it is important for them to have native AE speakers from the professional setting come into the classroom for their initial attempts at professional communication. Mistakes can safely be made, examined, and discussed in a classroom. Further, by observing the interviewer, they can adopt language and mannerisms that were modeled in the interview.

Unit Reflection

Overall, students have found this unit authentic and a source of self-reflection, looking at where they are headed and how they will get there. Our outcomes are to recognize and practice professional voice and AE in written and spoken forms as well as to carefully read assignments and address them specifically in our work. Yet, not only does it cause them to recognize the use of AE in a formal setting, through this unit students began to reflect on their purposes for enrolling in school. In the end, I have had several students decide on an educational path or change a path they were pursuing after this unit, one student who found a mentor in his interviewer who is helping him with guidance in his field of expertise, and a group of employers just a bit more informed about the literacy issues of those who come to them for employment. Further, they walk away with a formal AE interview practiced, a list of

qualities they want to acquire over the next five years (mock resume) as they continue their education, and more of the vocabulary for the field of their choice.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

Literacy in America is defined by an adult's ability to comprehend and construct Academic English, the decontextualized dialect that spans the many sub-cultures across the country. It is a unifying language used in daily tasks of adult life from employment forms to voting, to reading the newspaper. And as an adult becomes literate in this formal English dialect, through the instructional pedagogy of Teaching English as a Second or Other Language, opportunities open that were obstructed by the unfamiliar speech code of the academic and professional settings.

The developmental education classes at the community college level offer the facilitation of sociolinguistic development while fostering the language instinct already present in students. Through sociolinguistic education and exposure, the students are empowered as participants in the civic, educational, and professional settings that help them to prosper and achieve their goals: the ultimate outcome of the courses.

Within this academic setting, instructors can adopt TESOL strategies once they understand the connection between acquiring a new dialect and a new language, which is to learn to comprehend the structure and grammatical complexities as well as to construct appropriate responses to the sociolinguistic cues of various settings where the language or dialect will be used. Looking through the lens of language

acquisition to find the best practices in improving literacy among English speaking adults offers a unique perspective for the classroom: one which recognizes the richness of the linguistic knowledge students come in with, as well as identifies one of the factors that led to the gaps life has left in their sociolinguistic education, and helps them to collect the blocks of skills to connect the limited road they are on to the brighter path of their future.

Take, for example, the student who first inspired this paper. He had spent almost ten years in prison, from the time he was 15 years old to when he was in his early twenties. When he stepped out of the stifling culture of the prison, he found the language he had adopted in that culture did not serve as appropriate communication in the broader society. If he were going to walk away from the lifestyle and life choices that led him to prison, he needed to learn a new culture and a new language. After taking the developmental education classes in reading, writing, and study skills, this student has graduated into college level classes where he is working toward his goal of productive employment. Nearly two years after his introduction to AE, he is fluent and using that language in college level classes toward his associates degree. He is so successful, thus far in his education, that the college he now attends has featured him in their promotional video and he speaks to incoming students about the opportunity they are entering. This is the kind of transformation, from not speaking in class to being a spokesperson for higher education that the acquisition of AE can offer to adult students in the community college classroom.

This is the kind of success story that sparked me to consider how to increase AE language skills in my students who tested at the illiterate level of English. However, this offers merely anecdotal evidence. What is needed in the field is qualitative and empirical research on a larger scale to test the strides in standard competencies of developmental education students when their linguistic development of the decontextualized formal dialect of AE is central to the pedagogy of the classroom. Further studies also are needed in the pedagogy of TESOL and primary language acquisition in a culture such as America where a diversity of dialects are spoken within the larger context of a single language. Unsilencing the silenced is inspiring, and research in the area of how sociolinguistic education can facilitate this unsilencing to a broader community of adults can lead to addressing America's adult literacy issues across the whole of our community college system. From my experience, deliberately addressing their need to acquire a language has given me a more focused lens through which to assess my students' needs and to offer instructional practices that lead to clearly defined outcomes for the developmental education class.

APPENDIX A

Standard Competencies Reading 090 and ELL Advanced Reading

Reading 090

- I. Transferable Competencies Key:
 - A. Think creatively and critically
 - B. Allocate resources
 - C. Communicate effectively
 - D. Function as a part of a team
 - E. Acquire and evaluate data
 - F. Understand systems
 - G. Choose and apply appropriate technology
- II. Develop and demonstrate college level vocabulary skills (1,2,3,5,6,7)
 - A. Analyze word structure for recognition and meaning
 - B. Use dictionary skills for spelling, meaning and usage
 - C. Infer the meaning of vocabulary in context
 - D. Improve and increase personal vocabulary for general college success and specific fields of study
- III. Apply basic reading comprehension skills to high level reading (1,2,3,5,6,7)
 - A. Locate the stated or implied topic and main idea in paragraphs, essays and other longer passages
 - B. Analyze reading to determine the adequacy and relevancy of support provided for main ideas
- IV. Analyze the structure of reading passages (1,2,3,5,6,7)
 - A. Demonstrate cognizance of paragraph organization
 - B. Analyze longer passages for organizational patterns
 - C. Analyze essay organization, identify thesis and major points, and evaluate the effectiveness of argumentative writing
- V. Evaluate content reading passages critically (1,2,3,5,6,7)
 - A. Analyze passages to identify the author's intended audience, purpose, tone
 - B. Discriminate between fact and opinion
 - C. Infer meanings in paragraphs and longer passages
 - D. Determine the writer's point of view and recognize bias
 - E. Analyze the format of textbooks to determine the available study aids
 - F. Apply a reading and study system to a variety of reading situations
 - G. Evaluate when to use skimming and scanning
 - H. Develop a method of textbook marking and annotation

- I. Create mind or concept maps to facilitate learning
- J. Construct detailed and well-organized outlines
- K. Assess and apply methods for increasing reading rate and adjusting rate to purpose
- L. Analyze and demonstrate comprehension of charts, graphs and maps

ELL Advanced Reading

- I. Use pre-reading strategies to activate background knowledge, set purpose for reading, and predict content.
- II. Comprehend texts at an academic level suitable for first year college classes.
- III. Employ critical reading skills to evaluate, analyze, paraphrase, and summarize readings.
- IV. Increase vocabulary knowledge.
- V. Locate information in libraries and on the Internet.

TOPICAL OUTLINE:

- I. Pre-Reading Skills
 - A. Purpose for reading
 - B. Reading speed to fit purpose
 - C. Skimming
 - D. Prediction
 - E. Background knowledge
- II. Comprehension Skills
 - A. Main ideas of paragraphs and multi-paragraph readings
 - B. Inference of main ideas
 - C. Relationships of ideas as shown by key vocabulary
 - D. Sentence syntax analysis
 - E. Graphs
- III. Critical Reading Skills
 - A. Adequacy of support
 - B. Reasons for agreeing or disagreeing with a writer's viewpoint
 - C. Fact or opinion
 - D. Paraphrasing
 - E. Summarizing
- IV. Vocabulary Building
 - A. Context clues
 - B. Stems and affixes from Latin and Greek

- C. Connotation
- D. Multiple meanings
- E. Parts of speech
- V. Research Skills
 - A. Locating books and periodical articles in a library
 - B. Using an Internet search engine to locate information
 - C. Evaluating reliability of information

APPENDIX B

Standard Competencies for English 090 and ELL Advanced Writing

English 090

- I. TRANSFERABLE COMPETENCIES KEY:
 - A. Think creatively and critically
 - B. Allocate resources
 - C. Communicate effectively
 - D. Function as a part of a team
 - E. Acquire and evaluate data
 - F. Understand systems
 - G. Choose and apply appropriate technology
- II. Understand and develop writing as a process in college preparatory essays by:
 - A. Prewriting
 - B. Analyzing purpose, audience, and point of view
 - C. Drafting
 - D. Reading/reviewing drafts
 - E. Revising
 - F. Using appropriate word choice and various sentence structures
 - G. Editing for correctness
 - H. Transferable Competencies: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7
- III. Apply knowledge of the writing process to a variety of college preparatory reading and writing tasks by:
 - A. Responding to texts in writing
 - B. Understanding and using vocabulary appropriate to the study of composition, methods of organization, and grammar
 - C. Developing the various components of formal essays
 - D. Selecting and employing appropriate organizational strategies
 - E. Matching form to a variety of writing purposes
 - F. Practicing basic citation/documentation skills as appropriate
 - G. Incorporating researched material as appropriate
 - H. Transferable Competencies: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7
- IV. Integrate reading, writing, and critical thinking skills at a college preparatory level by:
 - A. Reading closely to identify, analyze, evaluate, and discuss with fluency an author's purpose, tone, methods of development, thesis, credibility, and

- validity (for print and on-line text)
 - B. Applying close reading discoveries to writing summaries, critical analyses, and reactions
 - C. Transferable Competencies: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7
- V. Succeed in a supportive learning environment by:
 - A. Taking responsibility for their own learning
 - B. Developing a reflective attitude toward their own learning
 - C. Experiencing reading and writing as processes of discovery
 - D. Monitoring their own comprehension and asking questions as needed
 - E. Developing a sense of community with other learners
 - F. Transferable Competencies: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7
- VI. Incorporate college support systems, as available, by:
 - A. Following the advising procedures to ensure accurate placement
 - B. Applying appropriate learning strategies to self-management in completing and seeking appropriate help with writing assignments
 - C. Working with Writing Center/Writing Lab faculty (as available) to overcome deficiencies and to build self-confidence in the writing process
 - D. Using technology as appropriate
 - E. Transferable Competencies: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7

ELL Advanced Composition

- I. Follow a recursive process in writing course assignments.
- II. Write well-organized, clearly focused, well-developed expository essays.
- III. Use common rhetorical modes in the development of essays.
- IV. Use the writing of other writers in an ethical, clearly documented way.
- V. Write grammatically correct simple, compound, and complex sentences.

TOPICAL OUTLINE:

- I. Writing Process
 - A. Pre-writing techniques
 - B. Revision
 - C. Audience awareness
- II. Elements of the Expository Essay
 - A. Thesis statement
 - B. Introductory paragraphs

- C. Support paragraphs
- D. Concluding paragraphs
- E. Coherence
- III. Rhetorical Modes
- IV. Writing from Sources
 - A. Documentation
 - B. Quotations
 - C. Summary
 - D. Paraphrasing
- V. Grammatical Structures
 - A. Review of clause structures
 - B. Editing practice
 - C. Punctuation
 - 1. Avoidance of fragments
 - 2. Avoidance of comma splices and run-ons

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ⁱ While much of Krashen's work around his "input hypothesis" has been widely criticized, there is still general agreement that a person's home environment is critical to primary language acquisition.

ⁱⁱ The Institute of Educational Sciences was established under the Educational Sciences Reform Act of 2002 for the purpose of research and evaluation as a part of the United States Department of Education.

ⁱⁱⁱ This study does not have the scope of addressing identified disabilities that impede literacy, but I recognize that this is certainly another important factor to literacy identification for another study.

^{iv} While both English Language Learning and Disabilities are both important factors in classroom preparation and curriculum building, because of the narrow scope of this paper being the linguistic literacy factors effected by the home culture, the scope and diversity of my students' individual abilities beyond that will not be addressed here.

^v While I recognize that addictions or educational issues can stem from many sources, including undiagnosed or untreated disabilities, as an instructor in the adult literacy class I am not equipped to identify the root of the problem. Rather, I am looking at ways I can address their current literacy needs. However, some of the root issues will be apparent when assessing needs, and then it may require recommendations to student support resources and other agencies offered by the college.

^{vi} Often class is seen as a determining factor in exposure to Academic English; however, while I recognize its validity of this argument in educational opportunities, I find that the separations from society as discussed in the two categories I define can cross socioeconomic and sociocultural lines throughout America because they tend to be situational factors rather than environmental factors.

^{vii} These standard competencies are set throughout CCCS to "establish consistency in course offerings across the system." Each competency is broken down to attainable and concrete objectives to be demonstrated by a student upon her completion of each course, as shown in Appendix A and Appendix B.